

Green cooperated with the dominant business community both openly and covertly. Ideologically, he conformed to the safe, comfortable conservatism that characterized the age of industrial expansion. Under his administration, business interests were prominent and powerful. For example, he signed into law the famous statute of 1889 that legalized the holding company and allowed businesses to incorporate for almost any purpose.

Upon leaving office, Green was appointed by his successor, Leon Abbett, to the New Jersey Court of Chancery. Some observers criticized the appointment as a political payoff, but Green performed well as a judge. His temperament seemed better suited for the judiciary than the executive. He died in Elizabeth on May 7, 1895, while serving on the bench. Interment was in the Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

All things considered, Green was not an effective governor. His concept of the office lacked sufficient scope, his programs were innocuous, and his leadership was insignificant. The essence of the gubernatorial role escaped him both as party leader and policy leader. He found it a burden rather than an exciting opportunity. The Green administration earned the admiration of the business community, but it did not capture the passion of the times or the imagination of the electorate.

Richard A. Hogarty



GEORGE THEODORE WERTS (March 24, 1846-January 17, 1910), lawyer, state senator, supreme court justice, twenty-eighth governor of New Jersey, was born at Hackettstown, Warren County. He attended the public schools in Bordentown and completed his academic training at

the State Model School in Trenton. In 1863 he moved to Morristown to study law with his uncle, the former Attorney General Jacob Vanatta. Four years later the twenty-one-year-old law clerk was admitted to the New Jersey bar. He promptly established an office in Morristown.

Over the next sixteen years Werts built a lucrative law practice and gained a reputation for integrity and skill as a trial lawyer. Although he was a Democrat in an overwhelmingly Republican community, he was elected recorder of Morristown in 1883 and mayor in 1886. In the latter year, at the age of forty, he was also elected state senator from Morris County. His political success was due in no small measure to his wife, the former Emma Stelle, whom he had married in 1872. His marriage and the subsequent births of his two daughters helped fill an important social and emotional void in his life.

During his six years in the senate Werts compiled a commendable record, highlighted by his election as senate president in 1889. His name is associated with two pieces of legislation—election reform and local liquor option—but neither statute proved more than a politically motivated and ineffectual expedient. His independent legislative record nonetheless brought him to the attention of Governor Leon Abbett. The governor's term would expire in 1893, and he had his eye on a seat in the United States Senate. Fearing that a promising young legislator with political ambitions might threaten his plans, the governor appointed Werts to the state supreme court in February 1892 to fill a vacancy on the Hudson County circuit.

Abbett had little need for concern. Werts was a party man who had previously demonstrated his loyalty by sponsoring an act that shortly before Abbett's inauguration doubled the governor's salary. In 1892, despite his earlier fears, the governor supported Werts for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination rather than allowing one of his political enemies to gain the nomination. Although the Democratic caucus had considered both Edward F. C. Young and Justice Job Lippincott,

Werts won an easy first-ballot convention victory.

His Republican opponent, John Kean, Jr., campaigned against the Abbett administration by condemning such abuses as ballot-box stuffing, the sale of political offices, and Democratic subservience to the liquor and racetrack interests. Although Werts remained inactive during the campaign and continued to sit on the bench, party chairman Allan L. McDermott ably handled Democratic strategy. He sought to divert attention from the damaging Republican charges of corruption by linking the gubernatorial race with the Democratic presidential campaign of Grover Cleveland. For in spite of the political stalemate of national politics between 1876 and 1892, the Democrats had carried New Jersey in every presidential election since the Civil War save that of 1872 and in all but one gubernatorial contest in the same period. The strategy worked perfectly.

Cleveland's fourteen-thousand-vote plurality proved enough of a cushion to carry Judge Werts into the governor's mansion by a margin of over seventy-six hundred votes.

In his inaugural address Governor Werts proposed expanding the state's prison facilities, creating a reformatory for juvenile delinquents, and passing ballot-reform legislation. He directed the bulk of his remarks at those who criticized New Jersey for not having anti-trust laws. Long before the United States Supreme Court's enunciation of the "rule of reason," Werts sought to distinguish justifiable from unjustifiable restraints of trade. "The distinction appears to be," he observed, "that where the restraint of combination is . . . simply the natural consequence and not the intent, the combination is not improper; where the object is to destroy competition and obtain control of . . . production . . . such combination is unlawful." Following the initiative of earlier Democratic administrations, Werts encouraged the combination of capital through the continuation of the state's liberal incorporation laws.

The 1893 legislature distinguished itself only by its excesses in violating morality and constitutionality. The most flagrant abuse occurred in connection with legalizing gambling at the state's racetracks. For a number of years prominent Democratic officials, including Assembly Speaker Thomas Flynn, had enjoyed a profitable working relationship with tracks in Gloucester, Monmouth, and Guttenberg. The legislature's passage of the bill to legalize gambling in arrogant disregard of public opinion stimulated the emergence of an influential anti-racetrack league. Though Governor Werts vetoed the legislation, racetrack critics alleged that his haste to do so prevented effective mobilization against the gambling interests and helped enable the "jockey legislature" to override the veto.

The bitterness the gambling legislation provoked was evident in the off-year election of 1893, which produced a thirty-thousand-vote majority for the Republicans and gave them control of both the assembly and senate. But gambling was only one of many issues with cultural overtones that made themselves felt at the polls. The antiracetrack crusade proved to be overwhelmingly Protestant in leadership and composition. The enthusiasm the antigambling campaign generated among evangelical Protestants and the apathy it met among Roman Catholics suggest the divergent ethnocultural attitudes that characterized New Jersey politics during the late nineteenth century. It was not coincidental that the Republicans imbued their 1893 campaign with a pietistic fervor that viewed gambling as immoral and received its most vocal support from the predominantly rural counties of South Jersey.

The GOP's success also came at the expense of urban, new-stock Democratic legislators who had supported the gambling legislation and succumbed to its moral repercussions. New Jersey's Catholic hierarchy's ill-timed attempt to obtain public approval for state aid to parochial schools further stimulated this pietistic fervor. Though Governor Werts and the

Democratic legislators tried to disassociate themselves from the church, the parochial-education issue intensified ethnocultural divisiveness. This, in addition to the impact of the 1893 depression, may account for Democratic defeats in the urban-industrial counties of Hudson, Essex and Passaic, and for the loss to the Republicans of seven of the state's ten largest cities.

Instead of accepting the results, the Democratic minority in the senate organized a rump session and refused to certify the eligibility of the newly elected GOP members. They advised Governor Werts of their decision and asked him to recognize their body as the senate of the state. Displaying the same notable absence of courage that had characterized his mishandling of the racetrack scandals, Werts acquiesced, following a policy of inactivity and neutrality that allowed the capricious, selfish, and partisan actions of this small group of Democrats to paralyze the state's political process. This tragically ludicrous episode, in which the state had two functioning senates, was resolved in March 1894 when the supreme court ruled the rump session illegal.

The substitution of a Republican majority did not materially alter the quality of New Jersey politics. The 1894 legislative session is memorable only for the GOP's efforts to dislodge Democrats from all key appointive positions. Governor Werts's inability to provide even minimal executive leadership encouraged both parties to operate in a factious vacuum rather than face the problems of mass unemployment and poverty. Trying to avoid all responsibility for the depression, the Democrats sought security in a campaign that identified their opponents with anti-Catholicism, prohibitionism, and antiurbanism. They denounced the GOP for countenancing the existence of secret Protestant societies and for using the pulpit for propaganda purposes. For their part, Republicans supported legislation that would restrict religious training in public schools to the reading of the Lord's

Prayer and require all schools to fly the American flag.

Cultural divisions continued to dominate state politics. Discussion of the depression revolved solely around its political repercussions and avoided any mention of possible solutions. Although the Democrats succeeded in regaining some legislative seats in 1894, the Republicans continued to capitalize on the depressed economy to secure majorities in state and congressional contests. Indeed, the precipitous Democratic electoral failures after 1892 can best be attributed to depression-created voter realignments and to the residual effects of the antiracetrack and antigambling crusades. Issues such as aid to parochial schools, naturalization, and gambling evolved into moral questions pitting old-stock Protestant Republicans from South Jersey against the new-stock Catholic urban Democrats from northeastern counties.

In his annual message to the 1895 legislature Governor Werts simply repeated past proposals for prison expansion and ballot reform, adding a call for water conservation. The legislature enacted none of these measures. Instead, it passed the Storrs Naturalization Act over the governor's veto. This infamous statute, which was clearly aimed at new-stock immigrants and the Democratic party, prohibited naturalization one month before any election. The legislature also rejected two amendments submitted by a special constitutional commission, one to outlaw gambling and the other to give women the right to vote in local school-board elections. But the most spectacular achievement of the 1895 legislative session centered on an investigation that uncovered corruption, graft and waste in state government. Former Democratic officials were discovered to have sold pardons and accepted bribes and kickbacks from construction companies. The disclosure of Democratic corruption significantly helped the Republicans to elect John W. Griggs governor and to keep control of the legislature in 1895.

It was George T. Werts's misfortune to preside over the dismantling of the Democratic party, which had dominated New Jersey politics between 1869 and 1896. Though the governor had scrupulously avoided any personal taint of illegality, his party's corruption contributed to its repudiation by the voters. Democratic supremacy in the post-Civil War period had resulted from efficient machine control at the local level. But the 1893 legislature had shocked even the most jaded citizens with its sordid behavior in legalizing racetrack gambling. The onset of the depression only accelerated a voter realignment toward the GOP that reflected a national trend and culminated in the election of William McKinley in 1896. It is clear that the vaunted Republican majorities of that year in New Jersey had actually been over three years in the making.

The governor's failure to provide leadership and his willingness to let the focus of power rest in the legislature characterized the Werts years. While the public was trying to cope with the most severe industrial depression of this generation, Governor Werts was leaving as his most enduring legacy a budget surplus of almost \$1 million. His administration was notably deficient in rebuilding the integrity of state government. Once his term ended Werts retired to private life and his Jersey City law practice. He died on January 17, 1910—the very day that Governor-elect Woodrow Wilson inaugurated a new period of Democratic control.

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JOHN WILLIAM GRIGGS (July 10, 1849–November 28, 1927) had many political admirers in a life that included service as New Jersey's twenty-ninth governor, United States attorney general, and member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. William E. Sackett saw him as a masterful and overpowering personality, "an intellect in a mold of ice." Walter E. Edge recalled, in *A Jerseyman's Journal*, that Griggs was "an attractive man—of fine appearance, an eloquent orator, a keen thinker . . . [with] a fine sense of humor and every attribute of warmth and understanding."

Griggs was a scion of a farming family that had been settled in New Jersey since about 1733. The youngest son of Daniel and Emeline Johnson Griggs, he was born at the family homestead on Ridge Road near Newton, the county seat of Sussex County. He attended the Collegiate Institute in Newton, then matriculated in 1864 at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. Although he had participated a year before graduation in an unruly protest against the abolition of student fraternities, he was graduated in 1868, and he returned to Newton, where he studied law as Robert Hamilton's clerk until May 1871. To complete the prescribed three-year apprenticeship, he served with Socrates Tuttle in Paterson. He received his license as an attorney in November 1871, and three years later he was admitted as a counselor. After two years of independent practice, he opened a law office with Tuttle. By 1879 he had